



## Indian Classical Literature (B.A. English Sem. III)



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## UNIT-1

Abhijnanasakuntalam, famously known as “The Recognition of Sakuntala” (through a token) was the first ever translation made of an Indian play into Western languages. This brilliant tale of romance and emotions attracted William Jones so much that he translated the play in English during the year 1789 and the tradition of translating the work of Kalidasa is continuing even today.

The play was not composed entirely in Sanskrit and contains elements of a Middle Indian dialect known as Maharashtri Prakrit. There is no certainty about the exact timeline or period in which the play of Kalidasa is written. The reason behind this uncertainty is due to the fact that there is no historical evidence about when Kalidasa was born and the period of his lifetime varies from 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C to 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

### **About the play:**

The roots of the play are taken from the Indian epic “Mahabharata” and several changes were made to derive dramatic effects and they all worked. As a result, most people consider the version of the origin of Bharata, misfortunes of Sakuntala and the story of Dushyanta by Kalidasa in Abhijnanasakuntalam is authentic. The plot revolves around Sakuntala, the daughter of the great saint Viswamithra and the heavenly damsel Menaka. Viswamithra in order to gain great rewards gets into deep meditation and the lord of heavens, Indra gets worried about his predicament if the saint completes his meditation. To save his position and be worshipped as the one with no equal, Indra sends Menaka to lure Viswamithra out of his contemplation to God.

After many efforts Menaka successfully disturbs the firm mind of the saint and he falls in love with the beauty of the damsel. As a result, Sakuntala (the name is given by the sage Kanva) is born and Viswamithra realizes what he has lost due to the union and rejects to be with Menaka and Sakuntala. Menaka is forbidden to enter Heaven with a human child so she leaves her daughter in a forest knowing well that the forest is under the protection of Kanva and he will take care of her. As expected by Menaka, Kanva finds the baby girl surrounded by birds called Shakunta, thus he names her as Sakuntala as she was seen with the birds who seem to enjoy playing with her. When the play Abhijnanasakuntalam opens, Sakuntala is seen in her youth with graceful mind and body.

### **Prologue:**

The play opens with a benediction to the gods and after the benediction the director and actress are enter the stage. The director introduces the name of the play as Abhijnanasakuntalam and asks to treat the audience with a song about the season summer. She sings so well that the director is spellbound and forgets why he is on the stage until she reminds the purpose of their appearance. The prologue ends with the director mentioning about failing of memory and relates it to the hunting Dushyanta.

### **Act – I or The Chase (Scene: The forest and then hermitage):**

Dushyanta, the king of Hasthinapura tries to capture a deer and is seen on his chariot when a hermit intervenes and warns that the place is under the protection of a hermitage and any animal that enters the place shall not be harmed. The King honours the words of the hermit and withdraws his arrow and puts it back into the quiver. The Hermit blesses the king with a boon to have a noble son and asks him to visit the hermitage of Kanva. Dushyanta is knowledgeable enough to know that a hermitage should be entered with all the modesty; therefore he asks the

charioteer Suta to halt, removes all his jewels and Kingly costumes to appear like a normal individual. As he takes steps forward, he hears the sound of hermit girls and is taken away by the beauty of them. So, he decides to hide behind a tree and observe them.

Sakuntala, Priyamvada and Anasuya converse with each other while a bee troubles Sakuntala and the admiring Dushyanta comes out from hiding to save her from the foraging thief. At first, Sakuntala gets scared of seeing a man who doesn't belong to the hermitage and runs away. Dushyanta reveals his true identity and is graciously invited to the hermitage. Sakuntala falls in love with the king as his delightful words and his face attract her very much. Dushyanta gives his ring to Sakuntala as a token. The King leaves the serene hermitage as the soldiers approach with loud shouts.

### **Act – II or Concealment of the telling (Scene: The Forest):**

Madhavya, the court-jester and a close companion to Dushyanta is seen complaining about his ill-fate having to wander the forest and eat on everything he could get instead of rejoicing in the palace. He tries to show his frustrations when the king meets him; however, Dushyanta consoles him and makes him to agree to help. They conspire together so that Dushyanta can get as close as possible to the beautiful Sakuntala. Dushyanta is reminded of the fast done by his mother and the oath he took to participate on the last day. At the crossroads, unable to decide whether to fulfil the oath or carry on with his heart's renderings Dushyanta sends Madhavya to the King's palace as his younger brother so that he could get closer to Sakuntala.

### **Act – III or Love's fruition (Scene: The hermitage of Kanva):**

The king couldn't resist himself from returning to the hermitage to see Sakuntala and as he enters speaking of the charm Sakuntala possesses, she and her friends enter talking in a flirtatious manner. He hides and watches them as they speak in that manner and Sakuntala begins to sing of love. Dushyanta comes out of hiding, unable to subdue his heart's cravings due to the influence of the poem. The four of them talk and gradually Priyamvada and Anasuya slip away leaving the pair in solitary independence. As their hearts drizzle with thoughts of lover's flirtations and they get closer with each conversation, from a distance the voice of Gautami is heard calling for Sakuntala. The pair separate with regret and Sakuntala leaves with Gautami whereas Dushyanta leaves to help the ascetics complete the evening prayers.

### **Act – IV or Sakuntala's departure (Scene: The hermitage of Kanva):**

From the conversation of Anasuya and Priyamvada it is revealed that Dushyanta and Sakuntala are married and they talk of the king returning to his capital, perplexity over fulfilling his promise to Sakuntala, Kanva's reaction to the union, etc. However, they conclude that everything will go just right as they hear a voice announcing himself at the hermitage while they're picking flowers. Knowing of the uncertain state of Sakuntala who is now always thinking of Dushyanta hurry back to see if she has properly received the guest.

The guest is Durvasa – a great saint with intense anger. He becomes frustrated to see Sakuntala not receiving him properly and curses her as thus:

As Durvasa is very powerful there is nothing they could do about the curse, instead they plead for consolation. Durvasa says that the token of the king (the ring) would enable him to remember who Sakuntala is and all the lost memories will be restored. The scene shifts and Sakuntala is shown preparing herself to leave to the Royal palace with the hope to restore the memories of her husband and make him aware of her pregnancy. Gautami helps her, so do Anasuya and Priyamvada; meanwhile, Kanva enters after completing his prayers with grief stricken heart as his daughter leaving. Gautami, Saradvata and Sarngarava are also ordered to go with Sakuntala and ensure she reaches the Palace safely and the reunion is without any trouble. Emotions flow through Kanva and every other individual in the hermitage as she leaves. This act in Abhijnanasakuntalam contains most unexpected events from announcing of the marriage to the curse and acceptance of the marriage by Kanva and Gautami.

### **Act – V or The Repudiation of Sakuntala (Scene: The Palace):**

The King is seen with burdensome schedules and is weary by performing his duties. Madhavya asks to listen to the song and music played by her wife Hamsavati. The song suggests subtly that she is being neglected and Dushyanta feels a yearning in his heart but cannot understand the reason for his heart to behave as such. At this moment, the chamberlain announces the presence of hermits from the hermitage of Kanva and Dushyanta asks for them immediately by inviting them with proper Vedic rites. After the reception, Sarngarava and Gautami remind the king of the secret marriage between him and Sakuntala but he cannot remember anything. Sakuntala understanding the effects of the curse by Durvasa tries to produce the ring on her hand and to her surprise the ring won't be in its place. Sakuntala shattered by the absence of the ring stands in the palace without any proof, while Gautami exclaims that she the ring might have slipped off in the pool while she was washing her face. Dushyanta accuses the hermits and Sakuntala, but the high priest suggests seeing if there is any truth behind the story as the people are from the hermitage of Kanva. Dushyanta agrees to provide facilities in the palace till the child is born so that the child could be examined and determined which of the two parties is speaking the truth. However, heartbroken Sakuntala asks the earth to take her and she is taken away by light to the bewilderment of Dushyanta.

### **Act – VI or Separation from Sakuntala (Scene: Capital of Dushyanta & The Pleasure Gardens):**

Two policemen recognize the royal signet ring in possession of a fisherman. The fisherman pleads that he found the ring in a fish he caught lately. A police chief goes to the king and submits the ring which disturbs him a lot. The fisherman is given leave without any punishment and further given compensation. However, Dushyanta feels horribly sorry for himself and the way he treated Sakuntala. By the time recognition of Sakuntala (Abhijnanasakuntalam) by Dushyanta is fulfilled he has absolutely no idea where she was taken and how to find her.

Misrakesi, an apsara comes to check the situation in the palace as requested by Menaka and she oversees things invisibly. She finds out from maids that the king is in a miserable condition and she relates the same predicament to Sakuntala. Dushyanta expresses his grief to Madhavya and the court-jester tries to console him.

Meanwhile, Chaturika brings the portrait of Sakuntala which intensifies the grief of the king and the same he feels terrible loneliness without his love. As the Queen Vasumati is expected to make her presence in the gardens, Dushyanta hands over the painting of Sakuntala to him and asks to flee.



An attendant comes to Dushyanta and informs the Queen has returned observing a note in his hand. The note is about a wealthy merchant who unfortunately died in a shipwreck and all his property is unclaimed. The King orders to give the property to whichever wife is pregnant, but decides against it as it is only fair to do justice to everyone depending on the trade of the merchant. So, he orders to share all the properties of the merchant to his family and loved ones.

The thought of a pregnant wife disturbs him as he with blindness turned out the one who was about to produce the heir of his family and the future king of Hasthinapura. As he laments his decision, he hears cries of anguish and finds Madhavya is taken by a demon form. He chases the demon and frees his friend only to find that the demon is Matali who came to take Dushyanta to assist in battle against demon – Kalanemi. It is revealed that Matali intentionally apprehended Madhavya to distract the King from the misery. Both Matali and Dushyanta mount the chariot as the act ends.

### **Act – VII or Sakuntala’s prosperity (Scene: Celestial regions & Hermitage of Maricha):**

Dushyanta along with other warriors of Heaven vanquish all the demons and he is seen returning with Matali. As they travel through the path of Heavens, Dushyanta expresses his desire to pay homage at the hermitage of Maricha. Matali takes him to the hermitage and leaves the king in the serene place. As the King contemplates on the divine presence and tranquillity in the hermitage he hears some voices and turns towards them to find a young boy playing with lion cube, trying to open its mouth so that he could count the number of teeth. He feels so related to the boy that he goes and pampers him and the ascetics are surprised to see that the boy also feels comfortable with the stranger. The ascetic women realize the armlet of the boy is missing and Dushyanta finds it where the boy was wrestling the lion cub previously.

Maricha gives that armlet during the natal rites of the child and it is charmed. Anyone apart from the parents or the boy himself touches the armlet it turns into a snake and bites them. The ascetics immediately recognize the stranger as Dushyanta and the King in joyously confident that the boy is his own and Sakuntala is in the hermitage. Sakuntala and Dushyanta unite in tears and the King explains how his memory got restored once he saw the signet ring found by a fisherman. Maricha, Aditi and Matali enter the scene and Maricha blesses the pair to live in prosperity. Maricha states that their family needs no boon as it includes a Father equal to Indra, Mother born of an Apsara and son who can make demons run. The play *Abhijnanasakuntalam* ends with the blissful reunion and the family is seen to return to the palace of Dushyanta.

This version of *Abhijnanasakuntalam* by Kalidasa is different from the one mentioned in the epic “Mahabharata”; however, apart from the dramatic effects and the dialogues the story reaches to its end in the same way as that described in the epic poem *Mahabharata*. Hence, many consider both the versions as authentic with only difference being the description of characters by the two poets.

### **UNIT-3**

*Mrichchhakatika* (*The Little Clay Cart*) is a ten-act Sanskrit drama attributed to Śūdraka, an ancient playwright whose is possibly from the 5th century CE, and who is identified by the prologue as a Kshatriya king as well as a devotee of Siva who lived for 100 years. The play is set in the ancient city of Ujjayini during the reign of the King Pālaka, near the end of the Pradyota dynasty that made up the first quarter of the fifth century BCE. The central story is that of a noble but impoverished young Brahmin, Sanskrit: Chārudatta, who falls in love with a wealthy courtesan or nagarvadhu, Sanskrit: Vasantasenā. Despite their mutual affection, however, the couple's lives and love are threatened when a vulgar courtier, Samsthānaka, also known as Shakara, begins to aggressively pursue Vasantasenā.

Rife with romance, comedy, intrigue and a political subplot detailing the overthrow of the city's despotic ruler by a shepherd, the play is notable among extant Sanskrit drama for its focus on a fictional scenario rather than on a classical tale or legend. *Mṛcchakaṭika* also departs from traditions enumerated in the *Nāṭya Śāstra* that specify that dramas should focus on the lives of the nobility and instead incorporates many peasant characters who speak a wide range of *Prakrit* dialects. The story is thought to be derived from an earlier work called *Cārudatta in Poverty* by the playwright *Bhāsa*, though that work survives only in fragments.

Of all the Sanskrit dramas, *Mṛcchakaṭika* remains one of the most widely celebrated and oft-performed in the West. The work played a significant role in generating interest in Indian theatre among European audiences following several successful nineteenth century translations and stage productions, most notably *Gérard de Nerval* and *Joseph Méry's* highly romanticised French adaptation titled *Le Chariot d'enfant* that premiered in Paris in 1850, as well as a critically acclaimed "anarchist" interpretation by *Victor Barrucand* called *Le Chariot de terre cuite* that was produced by the *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* in 1895.

Unlike other classical plays in Sanskrit, the play does not borrow from epics or mythology. The characters of *Śūdraka* are drawn from the mundane world. It is peopled with gamblers, courtesans, thieves, and so on. The protagonist of the play, *Cārudatta*, does not belong to the noble class or royal lineage. Though *Vasantasenā* is a courtesan, her exemplary attitude and dignified behavior impress the audience. The nobility of the characters does not stem from their social conditioning but from their virtues and behaviour.

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### Plot summary

*Cārudatta* is a generous young man who, through his charitable contributions to unlucky friends and the general public welfare, has severely impoverished himself and his family. Though deserted by most of his friends and embarrassed by deteriorating living conditions, he has maintained his reputation in *Ujjayini* as an honest and upright man with a rare gift of wisdom and many important men continue to seek his counsel.

Though happily married and the recent father of a young son, *Rohasena*, *Cārudatta* is enamored of *Vasantasenā*, a courtesan of great wealth and reputation. At a chance encounter at the temple of *Kāma* she returns his affection, though the matter is complicated when *Vasantasenā* finds herself pursued by *Samsthānaka*, a half-mad brother-in-law of King *Pālaka*, and his retinue. When the men threaten violence, *Vasantasenā* flees, seeking safety with *Cārudatta*. Their love blossoms following the clandestine meeting, and the courtesan entrusts her new lover with a casket of jewelry in an attempt to ensure a future meeting.

Her plan is thwarted, however, when a thief, *Sarvilaka*, enters *Cārudatta's* home and steals the jewels in an elaborate scheme to buy the freedom of his lover, *Madanikā*, who is *Vasantasenā's* slave and confidant. The courtesan recognizes the jewelry, but she accepts the payment anyway and frees *Madanikā* to marry. She then attempts to contact *Cārudatta* and inform him of the situation, but before she can make contact he panics and sends *Vasantasenā* a rare pearl necklace that had belonged to his wife, a gift in great excess of the value of the stolen jewelry. In recognition of this, *Cārudatta's* friend, *Maitreya*, cautions the Brahmin against further association, fearing that *Vasantasenā* is, at worst, scheming to take from *Cārudatta* the few possessions he still has and, at best, a good-intentioned bastion of bad luck and disaster.

Refusing to take this advice, Cārudatta makes Vasantasenā his mistress and she eventually meets his young son. During the encounter, the boy is distressed because he has recently enjoyed playing with a friend's toy cart of solid gold and no longer wants his own clay cart that his nurse has made for him. Taking pity on him in his sadness, Vasantasenā fills his little clay cart with her own jewelry, heaping his humble toy with a mound of gold before departing to meet Cārudatta in a park outside the city for a day's outing. There she enters a fine carriage, but soon discovers that she is in a gharry belonging to Samsthānaka, who remains enraged by her previous affront and is madly jealous of the love and favor she shows to Cārudatta. Unable to persuade his henchmen to kill her, Samsthānaka sends his retinue away and proceeds to strangle Vasantasenā and hide her body beneath a pile of leaves. Still seeking vengeance, he promptly accuses Cārudatta of the crime.

Though Cārudatta proclaims his innocence, his presence in the park along with his son's possession of Vasantasenā's jewels implicate the poverty-stricken man, and he is found guilty and condemned to death by King Pālaka. Unbeknownst to all, however, the body identified as Vasantasenā's was actually another woman. Vasantasenā had been revived and befriended by a Buddhist monk who nursed her back to health in a nearby village.

Just as Cārudatta faces execution, Vasantasenā appears and, seeing the excited crowd, intervenes in time to save him from execution and his wife from throwing herself onto the funeral pyre. Together the three declare themselves a family. Reaching the courts, Vasantasenā tells the story of her near death and, following her testimony, Samsthānaka is arrested and the good Prince Āryaka deposes the wicked King Pālaka. His first acts as the newly declared sovereign is to restore Cārudatta's fortune and give him an important position at court. Following this good will, Cārudatta demonstrates in the final act his enduring virtue and charity, appealing to the King for pardon on behalf of Samsthānaka who is subsequently declared free.

**ANALYSIS:-** *The Little Clay Cart* by Sudraka is a play about the extramarital relationship between Charudatta and his lover Vasantasen. The author was an Indian playwright as well as a king. The play was originally written in Sanskrit and later translated to English. The author writes the story to reveal that cheating is not right and can lead to a series of unfortunate events. The main theme of the play is infidelity. Despite the author revealing the consequences of having an affair, he still stresses the fact that true love prevails as both Charudatta and Vasantasen reunite in the end.

The play is captivating because the plot is unpredictable. For instance, the arrest of Charudatta surprised me and I did not see him reuniting with his lover in the end. The play is applicable to real-life as the rights of the poor in most cases are neglected in the justice system. Furthermore, infidelity has become a mainstream occurrence in today's society. Therefore, I relate with the events that take place in the play. Despite *The Little Clay Cart* being set in India, I feel that the play's themes are applicable to any society in the world today.

## UNIT-2

### “The Dicing” and “The Sequence to Dicing”

The Mahabharata, the longest Sanskrit epic, is a story of two sets of paternal first cousin who became the bitter rivals with each other. The epic revolves around the struggle for the throne of Hastinapura. The two collateral branches of the family that participate in the struggle are the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The Kauravas were collectively the hundred sons of the blind king Dhritarashtra and the Pandavas were the five sons of Pandu. The five brothers named Yudhistira (eldest son), Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva were always obedient and dutiful. Draupadi was the common wife of the five Pandavas. The Kauravas behaved viciously and brutally towards the Pandavas in many ways. Their malice displayed itself when they took advantage of the eldest Pandava, Yudhistira in a game of dice.

Living in the new territory of Indraprastha, Yudhistira turns his poor land into a wealthy kingdom, and declares himself King of Kings. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, is jealous and humiliated on his visit to the magnificent palace. He mistakes a glass floor for a pool, then later falls into a pool thinking it is glass. Draupadi and Bhima laugh at him. He returns home bent on devising their destruction.

**Game of dice** - Duryodhana follows the advice of his uncle, the cunning Sakuni, an infamous dice player, and invites Yudhistira to a game of dice. They know well that gambling is Yudhistira's one weakness. Vidura is sent to invite the Pandavas to visit Hastinapura and play a dice game there. Yudhistira accepts the invitation. Both Dhritarashtra and Yudhistira ignore Vidura's warning to avoid the game which may result to a destructive consequence. Sakuni was confident that he could defeat Yudhistira easily and thus Duryodhana could fulfil his ill-motive of outdoing the Pandavas.

Before the dicing, a lot of discussions were there, but Yudhistira is obliged to play. But Sakuni comes in to play for Duryodhana. During the dicing event Yudhistira stakes his wealth, Jewelry, Indraprastha, and the belongings of his brothers one by one and loses one by one. Sakuni mocks and provokes Yudhistira at each stage and demands to stake. He thus loses his brothers Nakula, Sahadeva. The Sakuni mocks him that at best those are the stepbrothers he lost, but Arjuna and Bhima are not so and he won't bet them. This forces Yudhistira to stake Arjuna, and his liberty at the stake as demanded by Sakuni.

At this moment of his complete defeat including himself, Yudhistira is again mocked to stake Draupadi. Yudhistira stakes Draupadi and loses her also. There were strong reactions from the assembly when Yudhistira staked her. Draupadi questions the legality of staking her when she was forced and dragged in front of the assembly. There were favouring reactions to her questions. Interestingly, Vikarna, a younger brother of Duryodhana, reacts in support of Draupadi. He says courageously that Yudhistira is enticed to play the game deeply plotted by Duryodhana and Sakuni. And that a lost Yudhistira has not the right to stake Draupadi. The assembly supported him. But Karna silenced him by saying that he is too young before the others in that hall.

Duryodhana in the open court chides Draupadi and invites her to sit on his thigh, patting and baring his thigh. He orders Dussasana to disrobe her in front of the court. Dussasana begins to execute the act. But Draupadi cannot be bared. She is endowed with the divine grace of being



in new dress to whatever extent the clothes are pulled by Dussasana. The strong Dussasana fails and becomes exhausted. The Assembly stands stunned at the miracle. Bhima sends shivering signals by oath that he will tear open the Dussasana's heart and drink the blood of him, and he shall break the thigh of the Duryodhana on which Draupadi was tauntingly invited to sit. The invincible Draupadi by the divine blessing made Dhritarashtra still more afraid of the Pandavas. He asks the pardon of Draupadi and releases all that was won on the dicing events.

Of course, dissatisfied at Dhritarashtra's act Sakuni and Duryodhana once again plead before Dhritarashtra for another dice game with Yudhistira. In the second spell of dicing event, Yudhistira is again defeated and is forced to go on exile for 12 years. The condition is that they should live in forests and pass the 13th year disguise without being identified by anybody. If they are identified by anybody during the period of disguise, they should repeat 12 years of exile in forest and the 13th year in disguise.

Thus losers in the deceitful act of gambling, and insulted by Kauravas, the Pandavas started for their exile in forest. Vidura told Yudhistira to allow mother Kunthi to stay back as she was old and weak. Yudhistira agreed. Draupadi, however, accompanied her husbands to the forest. Duryodhana became the de facto ruler of both Hastinapura and Indraprastha.

The Pandavas are not alone in the forest but are followed by many loyal Brahmins and servants. The gods give them an inexhaustible supply of food for all of them. The Pandavas reached Kamyak forest and decided to rest there for a while. Krishna came to help them. After inquiring about their well being, he advised Pandavas to be vigilant and not to lose heart. The ordeal they had to face was for their good. Good and bad experience are essential to get correct perspective and fulfillment of life. Suffering and sorrow bring requisite feeling of renunciation essential to seek higher goal in life.

The future of the Pandavas was determined by the game of dice. They had to undergo plight and suffering due to their defeat in the game. Yudhistira's temptation brought about that unexpected consequence. His wife Draupadi and his younger brothers fell victims to the horrible experience. The tragic fact of the Kauravas was another consequence of the dice game.

Gambling is an immortal action. It most often favours the evils. The gamblers do not hesitate to adopt unfair means to win the game anyhow. A man with morality is likely to get defeated in gambling. The ultimate result of the game of dice is the bloody battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The war of Kurukshetra fought between them brings about ultimate downfall of the Kauravas. The victory of the Pandavas symbolizes the victory of the victorious over the evil.

### **"Book of the Assembly Hall"**

Sabha Parva, also called the "Book of the Assembly Hall", is the second of eighteen books of Mahabharata. Sabha Parva traditionally has 10 sub-books and 81 chapters. The critical edition of Sabha Parva has 9 sub-books and 72 chapters.

Sabha Parva starts with the description of the palace and assembly hall (sabha) built by Maya, at Indraprastha. Chapter 5 of the book outlines over a hundred principles of governance and administration necessary for a kingdom and its citizens to be prosperous, virtuous and happy. The middle sub-books describe life at the court, Yudhishtira's Rajasuya Yajna that leads to

the expansion of the Pandava brothers' empire. The last two sub-books describe the one vice and addiction of the virtuous king Yudhishtira - gambling. Shakuni, encouraged by evil Dhritarashtra, mocks Yudhishtira and tempts him into a game of dice. Yudhishtira bets everything and loses the game, leading to the eventual exile of the Pandavas.

The book also details the principle of evil and crime against humanity, of why individuals who themselves have not been harmed must act regardless when society at large suffers systematic crime and injustice - this theory is outlined in the story of Magadha, Chapters 20 through 24, where the trio of Krishna, Arjuna and Bhishma slay Jarasandha.

## Structure and chapters

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Sabha Parva has 10 sub-parvas (sub-books, little books), and a total of 81 chapters (sections). The following are the sub-parvas:

### 1. Sabhakriya Parva (Chapters 1-4)

The first parva of second book describes the construction of palace for Yudhishtira and his brothers, then the finished palace. Sages and kings are invited to celebrate the completion of palace.

### 2. Lokapala Sabhakhayana Parva (Chapters 5-13)

Sage Narada arrives at the palace for celebrations. The sage rhetorically explain the theory of state craft for kings, how to find the most able people and make them ministers, how to train and take care of military, watch over enemies, rules of espionage, rules of war, support families of veterans who die or get injured at war, the support of farmers and merchants, care for poor and distressed in their empire, policies on tax, create incentive for Artha and prosperity, free trade, reward merit, pursue and punish criminal activities, deliver justice equally and without favor. Narada proclaims it is the duty of the king to serve the cause of Dharma, Artha and Kama in his kingdom. This theory of administration and governance of a kingdom in Sabha Parva, summarizes the detailed discussions in the Indian classic Arthashastra, claim scholars.<sup>[12]</sup> The other Indian Epic, Ramayana has a similar *kaccid* summary chapter on fair administration and the rule of law. Yudhishtira promises to follow Narada's advice. Narada describes the design, architecture and assembly halls of Yama, Varuna, Indra, Kubera and Brahma. Narada asks Yudhishtira to perform Rajasuya.

### 3. Rajasuyarambha Parva (Chapters 14-19)

Krishna explains why Jarasandha - the king of Magadha - should be killed, why human sacrifices by Jarasandha must be stopped, Jarasandha's prisoners freed. This would also help complete Rajasuya, he counsels Yudhishtira. Krishna is asked why Jarasandha is powerful as well as evil. He explains with the story of Vrihadratha (lord of the earth) and demoness Jara, how Jarasandha was named after the demoness.

### 4. Jarasandha-vadha Parva (Chapters 20-24)

Krishna, Arjuna and Bhishma arrive at Magadha, a prosperous kingdom inherited and ruled by Jarasandha. Krishna describes how King Goutama married Ushinara - a Sudra woman - and they had famous sons. They visit Jarasandha, who demands to know why he is being considered an enemy of Krishna, Arjuna and Bhishma, when he has done nothing wrong to any of them personally. Krishna explains that persecution of men is cruelty to virtuous life, and human sacrifice is a crime against humanity. Such a crime is sin that touches every one, including Bhishma, Arjuna and him. Jarasandha's sin is

injustice that must be challenged. They invite him to either release all the prisoners scheduled for human sacrifice or accept a battle to death. Jarasandha chooses war, picks Bhima as the adversary. Krishna counsels Bhima on principles of just war theory, a theory that appears in more detail in other books of Mahabharata. Bhima kills Jarasandha. The prisoners targeted for human sacrifices are freed.

#### 5. Digvijaya Parva (Chapters 25-31)

Pandava brothers expand their empire. Ariuna conquers the north, Bhima the east, Sahadeva the south, and Nakula wins the west. Yudhishtira is declared Dharmaraja. Digvijaya Parva describes the geography, tribes and various kingdoms as these brothers go in different directions to expand their empire.

#### 6. Rajasuyika Parva (Chapters 32-34)

Krishna visits Yudhishtira with presents. The Pandava brothers prepare for Rajasuya ceremony.

#### 7. Arghyahanana Parva (Chapters 35-38)

Kings, sages and visitors from around the world arrive for Rajasuya ceremony. Sahadeva offers *Arghya* - an offering with worship - to Krishna. Shishupala objects. Kings take sides. Hostilities begin. Shishupala leaves with some kings following him. Yudhishtira attempts reconciliation and peace talks.

#### 8. Shishupala-vadha Parva (Chapters 39-44)

The sub-parva describes how and why Krishna first refuses to fight Shishupala, but finally kills him in the assembly hall during the Rajasuya yagna. Krishna leaves.

#### 9. Dyuta Parva (Chapters 45-73)

Shakuni, the maternal uncle of Duryodhana, advises him that Pandava brothers cannot be defeated in a battle or by virtuous means; the only way to vanquish them is to exploit the weakness of Yudhishtira, his fondness for gambling. Duryodhana asks Dhritarashtra to exploit Yudhishtira's weakness over the game of dice. They ask Shakuni to tempt and defeat Yudhishtira. Shakuni provokes Yudhishtira for the game of dice. Yudhishtira shows reluctance to gambling. Shakuni mocks him. Yudhishtira accepts the provocation, bets his kingdom, his brothers, himself, and finally his wife in the 20th round of the game of dice; Shakuni wins everything. Draupadi is humiliated in the Assembly Hall by disrobing; her virtue leads gods to protect her in a skirt. Upset Draupadi questions the game, argues that she is not owned by Yudhishtira, the 20th round was flawed because it wrongfully treated her as property. Everyone in the Assembly Hall, including Yudhishtira and Dhritarashtra agree. The entire gambling game is declared invalid, Yudhishtira recovers everything he had lost.

#### 10. Anudyuta Parva (Chapters 74-81)

Yudhishtira is invited back again for the game of dice, Yudhishtira succumbs, and they play for one stake. Dhritarashtra bets kingdom of Hastinapur and Yudhishtira bets kingdom of Indraprastha. They agree that the loser will go into exile for 12 years and the 13th year, unrecognized in some inhabited place, and if they are recognized in the 13th year they are found then they would go into exile for another 12 years. Yudhishtira loses the game of dice again. The Pandava brothers move into exile. Dhritarashtra comes to power. Sages counsel him to make peace with Pandavas, seek a solution that unites the two sides. Dhritarashtra refuses. Scholars have questioned why

Yudhishtira the Dharmaraja, who had it all, and was praised for enabling an empire infused with Dharma, Artha and Kama, who was so consistently ethical and moral until the last two Parvas, succumbs so suddenly to gambling.

### **The Temptation of Karna**

This episode is devoted to the classic scene of the Mahabharata in which Krishna reveals to Karna his true descent. He never was the Son of a Suta, which everyone called him with scorn. No, he was in fact the eldest of the Pandavas-- the original Partha. Now that the truth was out, all Karna needed to do was embrace his Dharma, join his brothers, and assume the title of King of India. Poor Karna, always the victim of bad timing. It was way too late for such an offer. Perhaps if Kunti had stood up and claimed him as her son during the Pandavas' first military exhibition, he might have come around then, but now there was too much water under the bridge. Karna had been tossed out as a baby like the day's garbage, and had been scorned as a Suta when he tried to display his Kshatriya nature. His modest Suta parents and the evil Kauravas had been the only ones to come to his aid, and he would never give them up. Krishna failed in turning Karna, but somehow he allowed Sanjay to know of the entire conversation, so the story of Karna's descent and temptation was made known to all the Kauravas. Kunti caught wind of the encounter, and she made a go at turning him. She also failed, but she at least got the promise that he would spare her other sons, and should Arjun die, Karna would take his place as her fifth son.

### **UNIT-5 THE FIRE AND RAIN**

*The Fire and the Rain* is a play by the reputed Indian playwright Girish Karnad. The play is based on the myth of Raivya, Parvasu, Arvasu and Yavakri, described in the Vanaparva of the Mahabharata, narrated by the sage Lomash. Karnad however has subverted the original myth and created a thoroughly stage-worthy version.

Raivya and Varadwaj are the two great Brahmins who compete to become the chief priest in the fire-sacrifice which is arranged by the king to invoke rain as the country is going through long years of famine and drought. The king selects Parvasu as the chief priest as he is young. Varadwaj dies of grief. Raivya is jealous of his son's status. Varadwaj's son Yavakri goes to the forest to attain enlightenment from Indra and is blessed with Brahmagnyan after ten years. Yavakri returns to avenge the death of his father and uses his former lady-love Vishakha, now the wife of Parvasu as a bait. In the absence of Parvasu, Vishakha is sexually exploited by her father-in-law and easily succumbs to the seduction of Yavakri. As Raivya is aware of this, he creates the Brahme-Rakhshasha, Kritya to kill Yavakri. Vishakha comes to know that Yavakri has deceived her and pours out the charmed water that could have saved Yavakri. Yavakri is murdered by Kritya. Parvasu comes home secretly from the fire-sacrifice and kills Raivya. He plans to put the entire blame on his



younger brother Arvasu, innocent, bold and unorthodox, fiercely in love with a tribal girl Nittilai, as vibrant and lively as Arvasu.

The blame of killing Raivya is cunningly put on Arvasu and the mob beats him severely. Nittilai, who is married away to a boy of her own caste, leaves her husband to nurse Arvasu. A local theatre manager offers Arvasu to take part in his play. Arvasu has always wanted to act but had been barred from doing so by Parvasu and the society as a Brahmin is not supposed to act in a play. But now Arvasu is already convicted and denies all social rules. He plays the part of Vritra in the myth of Indra, Vishwarup and Vritra. Indra, the king of Heavens, is jealous of his brother Vishwarup and plans to murder him. Vritra tries to protect Vishwarup but Indra drives him away and kills Vishwarup. Parvasu reacts to watch the play within the play. The fire-sacrifice is looted by the hungry mob. Nittilai is murdered by her husband. Parvasu enters the fire and Arvasu decides to follow him when the voice of Indra is heard. Indra offers a boon to Arvasu. Arvasu decides to ask for the life of Nittilai..... Kritya comes and begs for his liberation from the state of limbo. Arvasu learns to be selfless and asks Indra to liberate the soul of Kritya.

Rain comes at the end, at the exchange and realization of sacrifice and the land becomes fertile.

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